Supernatural; Lucifer/Castiel; "You offered seven sorrows, and I drank them all." (The Flower Bitterness by Karin Boye)

PG-13, 1500~ words, and This is an AU of 5x18 regarding Castiel and Lucifer. Contains musings on Lucifer's nature, on the nature of angels, on the effect of cold on angels, Dean being confused and angry, on humanity, and a somewhat dubious characterization of Castiel.

In short, I hope that if you read it, you wind up liking it or at least coming away with thinky thoughts.

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Burning Cold, PG-13

He is remade cold, with bones made of ice and wings made of shivering snow crystals. He feels human skin being wrapped around his form, and a frigid power keeping the universe from touching him, from scattering his wings over the earth, like fine ash.

He does not know when he has a mouth, or a throat, or any of those human forms again, but he knows that he has them when a cold liquid is poured into his mouth and down his throat.

It is so cold it burns, but it is the power contained within it that allows Castiel to regain thought and movement and to open his eyes.

Everything about him is solid again, cold but strong and alive and anchored firmly to the power that brought him back and gave him back what was left of Castiel's own Grace.

It is a long moment before his open eyes can see, and by then he is so solid he is afraid of moving for that he might break the air.

Lucifer is staring back at him, and Castiel now knows that Lucifer didn't bring him back, the first time he died. He was warm, hot with the feel of thrumming Grace and blood as he flew straight to save the Winchesters.

Life from Lucifer is cold, and he realizes that he should be reacting, feeling with emotions to know that Lucifer is as close as he is. His mind is cold enough to be crystal clear, and everything he sees and feels and knows is sharp, and perhaps that is why he isn't feeling anger or despair or anything - emotions are hot and soft, and the cold has either frozen them or created a sharp so sharp it popped them open to escape from his mind.

Lucifer is still watching him, and Castiel realizes that he is finishing his work. The moment that air cracks as it fills the space around his form is the moment Castiel knows that he is completely alive, and that Lucifer's work is done.

Lucifer holds out a hand, and Castiel takes it after a short moment. His mind is working, and he knows why Lucifer did this, and he knows that Michael does not have Dean Winchester because he cannot feel the archangel on Earth, and he knows that Lucifer is expecting something from him now.

"You brought me back," He states, watching Lucifer. "Are you also this cold?"

There is approval in Lucifer's eyes. "When you get cold enough, you burn, Castiel."

Castiel nods, testing his Grace, and testing how it fits with Lucifer's added power, and discovering that the cold makes him faster, stronger - he is stronger than Heaven had ever let him be.

"Heaven often denies power to those who could wield it well, as I'm sure you know." Lucifer is speaking again, watching Castiel examine the ice on his vessel, on the clothes on his vessel. "You, who were merely a soldier, an angel, should have been of the Thrones at least. I am certain that you understand the concept of justice better than many angels who are of that rank."

"You added your power to mine," Castiel says, curling his hands into fists and back.

"I filled you with my Grace to bring you back from humanity, and showed you how to grasp power for yourself. The only trace of me upon you is the cold, Castiel, and that I cannot remove without undoing everything I have done to you."

Castiel examines Lucifer's power, his unhidden Grace and examines his own and sees that Lucifer is not lying. He mentions this.

"I don't need to lie. I rarely lie, and never to my own." Lucifer answers, and Castiel understands.

"I will help you," Castiel says after a moment. "But I must help the Winchesters as well. I owe them much." He does, for they showed him truth, and what free will meant, and what humanity was, and any pain that came from that, well, that was his own fault.

That, and the truth hurts if it is true enough.

He doesn't need to look at Lucifer to know that the Devil understands, and then he is gone, flying on new wings to Dean.

Lucifer will welcome him when he returns, and Castiel will return. He cannot match Lucifer's power, even if he is stronger than those of the Thrones, and Cherubim and more, as Lucifer was and is one of the first, and he was made strong enough to stand against Michael and Heaven.

Castiel isn't a fool. He has done foolish things, but the cold is lending him a clarity to his thoughts, and he thinks that Dean Winchester, who burns hot, will not understand his choices now.

Pestilence stops the moment the cold fills the room, and Dean discovers that he can stand, that he can breath, and that Castiel is taking advantage of Pestilence's distraction to remove his finger and ring.

Pestilence looks at Castiel, eyes wide, and then he laughs, and laughs as he vanishes. Dean doesn't want to know the joke that he missed.

Sam is scrambling to his feet, the demon is gone, and Castiel is putting the ring into Dean's hands.

"I apologize," Castiel says, and Dean cannot help but stare, for Castiel is pale, his eyes are blue, and he is covered in ice crystals that are breaking off every time Castiel moves. "I have not yet learned how to contain the cold entirely."

"Castiel?" Dean asks, and it's a long question, one that is asking for a full recap, a how are you here, a what happened to you, a what now and more.

"I did not survive the warehouse, Dean." For a moment Dean goes blank, thinking of ghosts and wondering at what ghosts could scare a Horsemen, but then Castiel goes on. "Lucifer brought me back."

The only thing Dean can say to that is this: "And you look like you've been showering naked on the North Pole why?"

"Lucifer burns cold, Dean." Castiel says, and that's nowhere near a good enough explanation.

"What does the bastard expect you to do for him, Cas? Why'd he bring you back?" Dean wants to know what they are about to sacrifice now for this good fortune.

"I am going to discuss the terms of my survival and how I can assist him, Dean. I will return when you have Death's location."

Dean swears. Dean reaches out to grab Castiel's lapels and ask him what the hell is wrong with him, but Castiel is gone, and the chill is gone as well.

Dean swears again, and because it's where Castiel would have been, he punches the air where Castiel's nose was.

The ring digs into his palm, and Sam's put a hand on his arm, and Dean just hands it over, swearing again.

Lucifer is still there when Castiel returns.

"When Heaven is subdued," Castiel says once he knows that Lucifer is listening. "I will turn my sword against yours, for humanity's sake."

"For the Winchesters?" Lucifer asks, and he is genuinely curious. Castiel tilts his head, examining Lucifer, and answers.

"They are creatures with free will, and while we should not bow to them, they have every right to exist as we do." Castiel examines his hands, eyes dropping from Lucifer's face. There is a too-human look of sorrow in his eyes, Lucifer thinks. "I imbibed alcohol. I fought with them against a common foe. I died for them, Lucifer. They are worth saving. Are you too proud to allow them to exist, Lucifer?"

There is silence while they both consider his words.

Castiel has been learning, on his flight to Dean and back. He has curbed the cold enough to allow himself humanity, and to remove the ice from his form, and to allow his blood to move through his veins. (Jimmy is long gone on to Heaven.)

He is relieved that he isn't as cold as Lucifer, as he is fond of his learned humanity.

The silence stretches, and Lucifer finally breaks it. He has been thinking, Castiel knows, considering everything.

"When this is over, Castiel," Lucifer says. "Before you turn against me, you must show me what you want me to spare. I have been away from Earth, after all, and they as a species may have grown somewhat since then."

It is as much as Castiel can ask from him. He nods, discovering what fear feels like again, and what anger feels like, and every other emotion that he has been learning.

Lucifer is studying him again, and Castiel meets his eyes.

Then Lucifer tilts his head back and chuckles, looking like he has figured out the joke, and Castiel inclines his head.

"I doubt I will regret raising you, Castiel." Lucifer says, still chuckling, and Castiel is left to wonder what the joke even was.